

Opinion: Nevada pulling out of TRPA would hurt transit at Tahoe

By Carl Hasty

The Tahoe Transportation District is on the brink of becoming an unfortunate casualty of legislation proposed to withdraw Nevada from the bi-state Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Compact with California. The unintended consequence of Nevada Senate Bill 271 will be a direct threat to over \$400 million programmed over the next five years for vital transportation improvements that will connect communities within the Tahoe Basin and further protect the clarity of Lake Tahoe.

SB271 was introduced by Nevada state Sens. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas, and James Settelmeyer, R-Capital Senatorial District. The bill is co-sponsored by Assemblymembers Kelly Kite, R-Minden, Pat Hickey, R-Reno, and Randy Kirner, R-Reno.



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I attended the recent hearing on the bill and understand the frustration with the state of California and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency expressed by the committee. When such frustration leads to hurried action, more problems can be created than solved. There are clearly problems to be resolved, some sooner than others. We welcome the spotlight that the bill shines on these problems, but we are concerned

it may cause more uncertainty and confusion and eliminate worthwhile projects. Rational discussion involving all parties, and a timeline for resolving major issues, may be a more constructive way to proceed.

In 1980, Public Law 96-551 passed by Congress amended the 1969 Compact between Nevada and California which established the TRPA. Article IX of this law created the TTD as an independent agency within the Compact. TTD is charged with facilitating and implementing safe, environmentally beneficial, multi-modal transportation programs and projects for the entire Tahoe basin in Nevada and California.

A primary funding source for TTD projects comes from the Federal Highways Administration through the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization, a federal transportation planning authority tied to the Compact in 1997. Should Nevada withdraw from the Compact, the flow of these funds would cease because the TTD and TMPO would no longer exist.

The 2010 Maximum Daily Load Report published by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection and the California Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region, documents that 70 percent of fine sediment and particulates clouding Lake Tahoe are a direct result of the region's 20th century transportation system.

TTD's outlook is to the future. The projects proposed and developed by the agency and its many partners are vital to protect and enhance Lake Tahoe while improving mobility in the 21st century and beyond. Those living and working in the basin and visitors from all over the world will be losers in the long run if projects are put on hold or never completed.

The TTD currently operates BlueGo, a bi-state transit service and has several projects in the planning and development stage. Those projects include a bikeway on the Nevada side of Tahoe, anchored by a roundabout and related improvements at

the intersection of Highway 28 and the Mount Rose Highway; Highway 50 Stateline Community Revitalization project, a centerpiece for the transformation of Stateline South Shore in Nevada and California; and the Highway 89/Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization project in Tahoe City. TTD is currently evaluating feasibility for a Lake Tahoe aquabus, a trans-lake passenger ferry service between the north and south shores, and potentially connected to smaller water taxis for shorter trips.

These projects will benefit all Nevada and California residents and visitors. However, without a fully functioning TTD and TMP0, there is very little likelihood that any of them will be accomplished.

Carl Hasty is executive director of the Tahoe Transportation Department.